

GUIDELINES: POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Mercer Area School District

Revised January 2021

Gifted Education

To inquire about gifted educational services please contact the following individual.

Michael G. Piddington, Ed. D.
Assistant Superintendent
545 West Butler Street Mercer, Pa. 16137
Phone 724.662.5100 • Fax 724.662.5109
Email: mpiddington@mercerc.k12.pa.us

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

GUIDING PRINCIPALS

Child Find and Screening	1
Writing a Plan	1
Meaningful Instruction	2
Program Options	2

Chapter 2

IDENTIFICATION & SCREENING

Procedures for Identification & Screening	3
Gifted Multidisciplinary Team	5
Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation	5
Gifted Written Report	7

Chapter 3

GIFTED INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Gifted IEP document	8
Notice of Educational Assignment	9
Twice Exceptional Students	9

Chapter 4

PROGRAM DESIGN

Elementary Focus	11
Middle School Focus	11
High School Focus	12

Chapter 5

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION: ELEMENTARY

Kindergarten & 1 st Grade	13
2 nd Grade	14
3 rd – 6 th Grade	16
Additional Projects	25

Chapter 6

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION: MIDDLE SCHOOL

7 th & 8 th Grade	26
Curriculum Compacting	27
Credit by Examination	27

Chapter 7

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION: SECONDARY

9 th – 12 Grade	28
Independent Studies	28
Credit by Examination	29

Chapter 8

ACRONYMS & GLOSSARY

Acronyms for Gifted Education	30
Definition of Terminology	31


Guiding Principles for Gifted Education

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education has defined the purpose of its regulations governing special education for gifted students in 22PA Code ~ Chapter 16.


The purpose of these guidelines is to describe the requirements and programs that the Mercer Area School District offers for gifted education. The regulations recognize that gifted students are considered to be “children with exceptionalities” under the Public School code of 1949 and in need of specially designed instruction. Our intent of this manual is to offer acceptable and best practices, procedures, and policies designed to meet the learning needs of gifted students.

Icon Key

 Child Find & Screening

 Writing the Plan

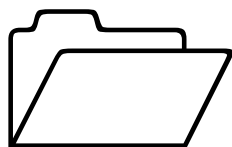
 Meaningful Instruction

 Program Options

Guiding Principles

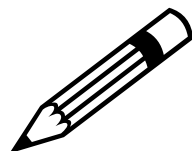
Programs for gifted children fit into an array of special programs, which reflect individual differences, equal educational opportunity and desire for the optimal development of each child. Our programs embrace the collaborative spirit among the educators and parents, therefore, giving our students a program that is tailored to their needs.

Child Find and Screening



The Mercer Area School District is responsible for identifying students that are in need of gifted education. A comprehensive screening for students in grades K-12 is conducted to find children who are ‘thought to be exceptional’. A multidisciplinary team (GMDT) conducts the evaluation. This team always consists of school personnel *and the parent*. Screening and evaluation procedures are further defined in Section 2 of this manual.

Writing the Plan



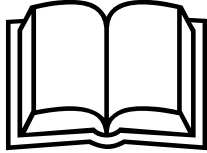
A Gifted Individualized Educational Program (GIEP) is developed for each exceptional child. This plan is based on information obtained from the formal evaluation process. Student assessment and performance data is reflected in the development of the GIEP. The gifted student may be involved in the development of the GIEP at the parent’s discretion. For more information on the GIEP process, refer to Section 4.

Meaningful Instruction



Our district ensures that the gifted student's individualized program is in a range of acceleration and enrichment options appropriate for the student's needs. The regular education curricula and instruction may be adapted, modified or replaced to meet the individual needs of the gifted student.

Program Options



Our district offers programming which includes the following:

- Acceleration, in which instruction is matched to the competence level of the student.
- Enrichment, in which opportunities for the investigation of appropriate materials are given.
- Individualization, in which instruction is matched specifically to the student's achievement, abilities and interests.

A continuum of programming services is offered based upon sound research and best practice. Research studies indicate that ability grouping, coupled with acceleration and differentiated curricula, provide maximum instructional benefit to gifted students. Incorporating homogeneous grouping of the gifted with systematic and continuous provisions in the K-12 educational planning offers gifted students opportunities to broaden and deepen their knowledge through interaction with their intellectual peers.

Procedure for Screening & Identification

Our district provides appropriate screening and identification procedures to all students of school age. Students may be identified at any grade level.











Screening is a two-step process. The first step is a systematic review of all students. This process garners information that allows the district to locate students that may be in need of an individualized gifted evaluation. The second step, known as the gifted multidisciplinary evaluation (GMDE) is a more intense review procedure. Parents are notified and permission is gained before the individual evaluation is conducted. Our assessment tools commonly include formal psychometric testing (eliciting an IQ score), classroom-based assessments (eliciting achievement levels), and observations. Once the evaluation is completed, a written report, referred to as a Gifted Written Report (GWR), is compiled and disseminated to all team members. Parents are invited to attend a meeting with the GMDE team. Recommendations are made as to whether the child is eligible for services.

➤ Step 1: Systematic Group Screening

STANFORD 10: Achievement tests assessing various academic areas. Administered to 2nd grade students.

➤ Step 2: Individual Evaluation

An individualized evaluation is conducted for any students that are found through the step-one group screening, after parent permission is received. The multidisciplinary evaluation will be conducted within 60 school days. The evaluation generates data from a variety of sources. These data should then be compared to predetermine multiple criteria for gifted/potential/performance. Our individualized evaluations typically consist of the following:

-  Psychometric Testing: IQ score
-  Achievement Test Scores
-  Curriculum Based Assessment
-  Observations
-  Rating Scale (for academic skills)
-  Parent Input
-  Teacher Input
-  Anecdotal Information
-  Interest Inventories
-  Review of Cumulative Record

A gifted written report is compiled and a copy of the report is mailed to the parents and discussed in a formal meeting. A recommendation as to whether the child is eligible for gifted education is decided at the conclusion of the meeting.

The entire screening and evaluation steps are a team effort between the parent and the school. All members of the team are valued for their input and understanding of the student.

A sample copy of the GWR is included in the appendix of this manual.

Gifted Multidisciplinary Team & Evaluation

The Team: GMDT

The Mercer Area School District believes a collaborative approach creates a strong, dynamic team. It is critically important that parents are involved in the process. According to the PA Code Chapter 16, the Gifted Multidisciplinary Team (GMDT) *must* include the student's parents, a certified school psychologist, teacher(s) familiar with the student's educational experience and performance and any other personnel necessary to evaluate the child.



The Evaluation: GMDE

Mentally gifted is defined as outstanding intellectual and creative ability the development of which requires specially designed programs or support services, or both, not ordinarily provided in the regular education program.

Intellectual ability is not equated with an IQ score alone. The term 'mentally gifted' includes a person who has an IQ of 130 or higher, when multiple criteria, as set forth in the regulations, indicate gifted ability. No one test or measure is sufficient to determine giftedness, and the evaluation and testing literature recognizes that there is a margin for error in any standardized testing.

If a student's IQ is less than 130, other factors, such as academic performance, demonstrated achievement and other observed skills must strongly indicate gifted ability in order for that student to be admitted to a gifted program. Such data would assess the child's rate of acquisition for new material and

Parents may, in writing, request a GMDE once per school year. rate of retention for new learning. Another criterion is that the student's demonstrated achievement indicates exceptional interest and ability in a specific area.

The Mercer Area School District has set the following criteria when determining if a child is eligible for gifted education.

Criterion for student in grades 4-12

To be eligible for gifted education a child must amass seven (7) points using the following scale:

IQ Score	130+	Automatically qualifies for gifted education
	129 – 128	2 points
	127 – 125	1 point
	124 and below	Does not qualify for gifted education ~ No other criterion used

PSSA Math	Advanced	1 point
	Proficient	0 points
	Basic and below	0 points
PSSA Reading	Advanced	1 point
	Proficient	0 points
	Basic and below	0 points
NWEA Math*	99 – 97 percentile	3 points
	96 – 94 percentile	2 points
	93 – 91 percentile	1 point
	90 and below	0 points
NWEA Reading*	99 – 97 percentile	3 points
	96 – 94 percentile	2 points
	93 – 91 percentile	1 point
	90 and below	0 points

* *Students must have achieved the indicated percentile on at least two (2) NWEA subject assessments within a 12-month period.*

Criterion for student in grades K-2

To be eligible for gifted education a child must amass five (5) points using the following scale:

IQ Score	130+	Automatically qualifies for gifted education
	129 – 128	2 points
	127 – 125	1 point
	124 and below	Does not qualify for gifted education ~ No other criterion used
NWEA Math*	99 – 97 percentile	3 points
	96 – 94 percentile	2 points
	93 – 91 percentile	1 point
	90 and below	0 points
NWEA Reading*	99 – 97 percentile	3 points
	96 – 94 percentile	2 points
	93 – 91 percentile	1 point
	90 and below	0 points

* *Students must have achieved the indicated percentile on at least two (2) NWEA subject assessments within a 12-month period.*

Independent Evaluations

Parents may, at their own expense, have a private evaluation completed. Our district will review the results and consider the information. It is at the discretion of our district as to whether the evaluation is utilized in the eligibility determination for gifted education.



Gifted Written Report: GWR

The information gathered by the GMDE is compiled into a Gifted Written Report. The report brings together the testing information, scholastic information, and other relevant information concerning the student's educational needs and strengths. The report makes recommendations as to whether the student should receive specially designed instruction for gifted education or whether they should remain continued in their present regular education program.

If the GMDE recommends the child is eligible for gifted education, the district arranges for a Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP) meeting.






The next step: The GIEP meeting to determine eligibility. It is the responsibility of the GIEP team to make final determination of whether a child is in need of a gifted education program. It considers the information from the GMDE team, but has the duty of making the final decision.

Gifted Individualized Education Program (GIEP)

The GIEP is written to ensure the student has an appropriately designed program based upon their needs and strengths.

The GIEP team should be comprised of individuals who are able to interpret the GMDE evaluation data and make decisions regarding programming needs. This team will commonly have the same team members as the GMDE team, with the addition of a gifted support teacher added. All members should actively participate to create a program that is individualized for the student.

Icon Key

-  *Present Education Level*
-  *Goals & Outcomes*
-  *Specially Designed Instruction*
-  *Dates & Timelines*
-  *Assessment Criteria*

GIEP Document

The Gifted Individualized Education Program document must contain specific information regarding various aspects of the student's program. A sample template of our GIEP is attached in the appendix of this manual.



Present Education Level

This portion of the document lists the student's ability and achievement scores, instructional levels, specialized interests, products, and other evidence of excellence. It serves as a starting point for developing the specially designed instruction.



Goals and Outcomes

Annual goals and short-term learning objectives are outlined. This list is created by the ideas from the GIEP team. The goals will address curricular and skill areas in which the student needs to have acceleration or enrichment activities.



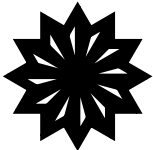
Specially Designed Instruction

This section of the GIEP designates what adaptations or modifications may need to be made to the general education curriculum. Instructional methods, materials, instructional environment and specialized curriculum to be delivered through gifted support are described as well.



Dates and Timelines

The GIEP should list the date the services will begin and when they will need to be reviewed. A GIEP must be revised at least once every calendar year.



Assessment

Assessment methods must be listed for each goal and outcome. This can be done through a variety of assessment methods. Often performance and product assessment are used. Portfolios are a common method to collect student achievement.

Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA)

1. After the GIEP document is completed, a Notice of Recommended Assignment (NORA) is signed by the parent. This is a single document in which the parent gives approval for the program that has been designed.
2. The NORA designates the level of intervention (in other words, the amount of time) that a student will receive gifted support services.

Twice Exceptional:

The Mercer Area School District will meet the needs of those students identified as twice exceptional using the procedures and policies governing Chapter 14 special education (22 Pa. Code). To fully address the needs of the student, a single IEP will be developed and implemented for twice exceptional students that includes services identified by the gifted status. Should a student no longer be identified as eligible for both gifted and special education services a new educational plan will be developed using the single exceptionality of gifted or special educational services. The single exceptionality educational plan will be written in accordance with the governing policies and procedures of the eligible exceptionality, i.e. Chapter 16 or Chapter 14 (22 Pa. Code).

Program Design

Our district provides a combination of both acceleration and enrichment for gifted support programs.

A Comprehensive program for K-12 consists of a variety of options for programming. Throughout the district, we have attempted to design programs that reflect the individual student's needs and be age appropriate. All programs that are designed are meant to deliver learning opportunities that are meaningful in content and may be delivered in a variety of settings. Although each child's program is designed individually, we have devised goals for our gifted program in the areas of elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Many of the program design options are found in the list below:

- Specialized Curriculum
- Compacted Curriculum
- Grade or Subject 'Skipping'
- Credit by Examination
- AP Courses and other Courses at 'earlier than normal' Access
- Distance Learning
- Enrichment in Content Areas
- Incorporation of Outside-of-School Activities
- Independent Learning Contracts

Elementary Focus: Grades K – 6

The elementary experiences in gifted education are designed for both acceleration and enrichment. There tends to be a stronger emphasis on the enrichment experiences. The activities offered to students focus on a broad knowledge level, therefore, giving children learning opportunities that cross all curricular domains. We want to expose children to many learning topics that they would not typically encounter in their regular education curriculum. Also, many times, the regular education curriculum can be explored at a much greater depth than would be typically studied in the classroom. In the elementary, skill development is an important aspect of our gifted support services. It is through learning experiences that offer depth, creativity, and challenge that gifted students learn best. The following page is a list of skill development areas for the elementary aged student.



1. **The development of higher levels of thinking skills.** A focus is placed upon analysis, synthesis and evaluation skills.
2. **The development of research skills.** Students will complete independent and small group research studies.
3. **The development of communication skills.** Effective listening and speaking skills will be developed. Conversational language, which allows students to share their ideas and support their opinions, will be fostered.
4. **The development of creative thinking and expression skills.** Students will be guided into creative problem solving activities and demonstrate their knowledge through verbal, written, artistic, dramatic, musical and physical mediums.
5. **The development of interest exploration and positive attitude of self-worth.** Students are encouraged to develop realistic appraisals of their own work.

Middle School Focus: Grades 7 – 8

In the middle school grades, learning opportunities are offered with an equal emphasis on acceleration and enrichment. Higher-level thinking skills, independent and cooperative research skills, communication skills, and creative thinking and expression are still emphasized. A particular focus is aimed at helping the student develop a sense of his/her individual learning strengths and interests.

Student scheduling begins to impact the design of the program for each student.

- **Enrichment:** Expanding the learning opportunities in the regular education classroom.
- **Acceleration:** Includes grade skipping and credit by examination.

High School Focus: Grades 9 – 12

At the secondary level, learning opportunities are offered for both enrichment and acceleration. A much heavier emphasis is placed upon acceleration options. Individual needs are commonly addressed through individual learning activities with the gifted support teacher. The student's interests and abilities are addressed.



Secondary level students are encouraged to extend beyond the normal curriculum and show application of their learning.

Many of the activities encourage students to essentially “create their own learning experiences” in relation to their strengths.

Students at the secondary level are encouraged to participate in their GIEP meeting and help design their program.

Curriculum & Instruction Elementary

All curriculum and instruction activities are subject to change based upon individual student needs.

Typically 'pull-out' enrichment is a common practice for students in the elementary gifted support program. A central theme of study is designated each year. The units of study, which are content and skill driven, focus on aspects of the central theme. The content is cross-curricular and addresses math, social studies, science, language arts and humanities. Assessment products are maintained throughout the year in a portfolio.

Elementary: Kindergarten & 1st grade

Students identified as gifted K-1 are provided enrichment by the gifted support teacher in the student's strength areas. The materials used are to develop critical thinking skills in reading, math, writing and science. Technology and computer skills are incorporated in the program. Regular education teachers are provided materials by the gifted support teacher to challenge and differentiate instruction for the student within the regular classroom.

The Gifted Individualized Education Program is devised with the parent and members of the GIEP team. This allows the plan to be very personalized and tailored to the student's specific needs. At this young age, students have commonly explored science and social studies topics of which they have an interest. Foreign language is often introduced. Software programs, which stimulate critical thinking, are utilized. Many young gifted students have advanced reading skills. The gifted support teacher, librarian and regular classroom teacher collaborate to find appropriate and meaningful reading activities for the student. Often creative writing and art activities are incorporated into the learning activities with the gifted support teacher.

Elementary: 2nd Grade

Students in second grade begin to broaden their knowledge base across the curricular areas. Skill development is emphasized in the areas of critical thinking, writing, logic/problem solving and concept attainment. All instruction units are based upon connection to a central theme. Although the list below is the common structure for the school year, individualized activities may also be in addition to the plan listed below. The list of additional resources is a compilation of ideas that may be incorporated into a student's GIEP. Each child's needs and strengths are considered when developing specific skill and knowledge expectations.

Central Theme: *The World Around Me*

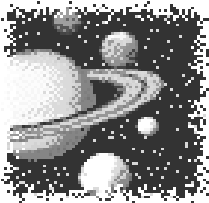
Units of Study



Cultures Around the World: Students will research various cities chosen by the students from around the world learning about the geography, cultures, customs and languages. Students will create a travel brochure for it.



Into the Unknown: Students become aquatic investigators as they study algebraic expressions. As they master various math skills, they can earn sand dollars and dive to deeper ocean depths.



To Infinity and Beyond: A unit that discusses the solar system by sending students on a Web quest. The students will create a chart illustrating what they discovered about the planets through their research. They will also construct a model of the solar system. Students will write creatively in conjunction with the theme.



Reptiles: A reptile research and model unit. Students will research a reptile to create a life-sized model of it with paper and paints. Students will share their reptile facts with other students in a short presentation.



Natural Disasters: Students will investigate tornados, hurricanes, tidal waves, earthquakes and volcanoes while completing various tasks as storm chasers. The unit concludes with the students building and activating a volcano.

Additional Resources

The following activities will be incorporated into the individualized aspects of each student's GIEP:

- Brainteaser Activities
- Puzzles
- Computer Programs
- Research
- Literature

Elementary: 3rd – 6th Grade

Students in grades 3 – 6 continue to broaden their knowledge base across the curricular areas. Higher order thinking skills, research projects, expanded writing opportunities and project-oriented activities are emphasized. Typically, 3rd - 6th grade students are 'pulled out' by grade level for enrichment activities. The enrichment is usually twice a week, for at least an hour and a half length of time. This will vary depending upon the individual student's need. In addition to expanded curriculum, some 6th grade students are accelerated in the area of mathematics.



The curriculum and instruction for the 3rd – 6th grade students is focused on a central theme for the year. There are four years of curriculum, so that no student receives redundant instruction during his or her elementary years. The units of study for each year cover the curricular areas of math, science, social studies and language arts. A different writing and reading focus is planned for each theme.

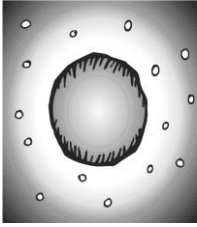
The instructional themes are as follows:

- Civilizations and Communities
- The Greek Influence
- Explorers
- Renaissance

Specific units of study, literature focus, writing focus and workshop/fieldtrips are listed on the following pages.

Central Theme: *Civilizations & Communities*

Units of Study



Mars City Alpha: A mission simulation focused on the initial design phases for establishing a human habitat on Mars. Students will be engaged in hands-on, action-oriented activities that will encourage them to solve space related technological problems with their heads and their hands.



Biomes: The students have been hired as a consulting company to build a zoological and botanical garden. Students will work as teams to research their biome and to prepare a presentation of their design for the zoological and botanical garden which will house the plants and animals of their biome



The Wonders of the World: Students will explore, investigate and research the wonders of the ancient, natural and modern worlds. They will then use this information to create a travel brochure for a Wonder of their choosing. This brochure along with a three-dimensional model will be used for a persuasive presentation to the class.



Ancient Egypt: Students will experience Ancient Egypt through cross curricular hands-on activities, research and projects-including but not limited to the creation of hieroglyphic name plates, wall reliefs, a personal pyramid, the authoring of a story set in ancient Egypt, and the creation of a three-dimensional mummy case.



Archaeology: Students will learn of the importance of archaeological sites, the preservation of these sites, and the information that these sites can provide. Students will learn of the tools, techniques and skills involved with excavating a site, as well as the process of identifying and preserving artifacts. Students will have the opportunity to perform a mock excavation.



Writing Focus:

Informational
Persuasive
Poetry
Narrative



Public Speaking:

Oral presentation component for each unit



Technology Focus:

Word Processing
Power Point
Publisher
Internet



Literature Focus:

The Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs by Betty G. Birney

Workshops / Field Experiences

Field Trip ~ To support curriculum

Central Theme: *The Greek Influence*

Units of Study



Aristotle

Ancient Greece: Students research and study ancient Greek society. Information will be gathered in regards to citizenship, way of life, food habits, architecture, and literature. Students will be able to make connections between ancient Greece and society of today. Research will be presented in an informational format chosen by the student.



Olympics: Students will research the first Olympics. Students will then create games based on these ancient competitions and posters to advertise the event. Students will present information and game rules to the class. Students will have the opportunity to experience these competitions.



Architecture: Students will study various styles of architecture identified with ancient Greece. Working in cooperative groups students will design and create a three-dimensional model of a building featuring their information. Students will be able to identify present day examples of Greek architecture.



Art: Students will study and explore through Webquests the styles, mediums, components and forms of ancient Greek art. Using this information as a springboard students will create and decorate their own Grecian vase.

Workshops / Field Experiences



Field Trip: To support curriculum



Writing Focus:

Informational

Technical

Narrative



Public Speaking:

Oral presentation component for each unit



Technology Focus:

Word Processing

Power Point / Movie Maker

Internet

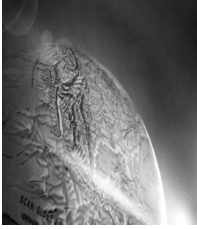


Literature Focus:

Odysseus in the Serpent Maze by Jane Yolen and Robert J. Harris

Central Theme: *Explorers*

Units of Study



Cartography: Student will have to the opportunity to explore, research, create, and use various types of maps. The progression of cartography will be studied and various internet programs will be used in the exploration of GPS driven mapping.



Flight: Students will participate in a hands-on exploration of the history of flight, the events and aviators who made contributions to the science of flight. Students will also conduct various activities including but not limited to using student-created paper airplanes, card bridges, balloons, and straws.



Lewis and Clark: Students will research and plan a modern-day trek that follows as closely as possible the original route taken by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. Students will need to decide on the size of the crew, the mode(s) of transportation, identify all needed supplies, map out the route, list an itinerary, complete a calendar schedule, and estimate the total cost for this journey. Students will implement Excel for record keeping.



Set Sail: Students will retrace the steps of early explorers of the sea. The lives of the explorers, their tools of navigation, and their voyages will be researched. Students will experience these early explorers through cross-curricular hands-on activities. Activities will include but not be limited to construction of navigation tools and scientific experiments.



Mercer County: Students will research Mercer County. They will investigate contributions made to the area in the areas of land acquisitions, real estate, agriculture and business and the people who helped to develop the county. Students will prepare a PowerPoint presentation to present the history of Mercer County and the lasting effects of these efforts.

Workshops / Field Experiences



Field Trip: To be announced.



Writing Focus:

Informational

Narrative

Persuasive



Public Speaking:

Oral presentation component for each unit



Technology Focus:

Word Processing

Power Point

Excel

Internet



Literature Focus:

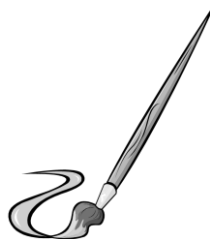
Race for the Sky by Dan Gutman

Central Theme: *Renaissance*

Units of Study



A Moment in Time: Self-selected independent student research focusing on a renaissance topic. Students create timelines using chronological order and scale to represent information, which will serve as a springboard for future projects.



Art of the Renaissance: Students explore artists, subjects, perspectives and techniques. Various formats of information are incorporated to provide examples of period art and to be used for research. Students become artisans as they create and paint with egg tempera.



Inventions: Students will research an invention from the Renaissance period and trace its history to present day. The students will then present their information to the class. The students will then design and create their own invention which will be presented to the class.



Music of the Renaissance: Students will use research of renaissance instruments to design or replicate a three-dimensional musical instrument from this period. Instruments will be presented to the class including a musical presentation.

Workshops / Field Experiences



Writing Focus:

Informational

Poetry

Narrative



Public Speaking:

Oral presentation component for each unit



Technology Focus:

Word

Excel

Power Point

Publisher

Internet



Literature Focus:

Midnight Magic by Avi

Additional Enrichment Projects

Stock Market Game: The Stock Market Game helps students expand their knowledge in the area of mathematics. Students learn investment strategies, discuss the general stock market process, learn economic concepts and play a mock simulation of the stock market.

Pre-Algebra Instruction: For students that have acquired mathematic skills through the 6th grade level, pre-algebra is offered with the gifted support teacher. This allows children to accelerate through the curriculum so they are able to take advanced math courses as they begin middle school. This class is taught using the seventh grade curriculum.

Independent Projects: To meet individual student needs, independent projects are designed to provide learning opportunities to students. These projects can range from research, to special topic learning, to computer-assisted instruction.

Math Olympiad: Students have the opportunity to practice problem-solving skills by participating in a math competition at school. These problems focus on various mathematical concepts and require the use of various problem-solving skills.

Newspaper: Students have the opportunity to author articles to be published in the quarterly elementary school newspaper. As part of this project focus is also placed on the use of Word and Publisher.

Web: Students are responsible for maintaining and updated the elementary website through the use of Front Page.

Curriculum & Instruction – Middle School

All curriculum and instruction activities are subject to change based upon individual student needs.

At the middle school level, a combination of ‘pull out’ enrichment, curriculum compacting, and acceleration are options most widely used for students in 7th and 8th grade. Independent study has been an option that is used if decided upon in the student’s GIEP. Each of these options is described in the following sections.

Enrichment “Pull Out”

Students in the 7th and 8th grade are given enrichment services by the gifted support teachers. A focus is given to creative thinking and expression, along with development of communication and technology skills. The central theme for the Middle School students is “Interest and Self Exploration”. Students participate in a mentoring program in which they correspond with an adult from the school district through emails and interviews about common topics of interests. This mentoring project is to establish a foundation for future career shadowing and mentoring projects.

The concepts of citizenship and community leadership are developed in projects and discussions. Field experiences are encouraged for enrichment outside of the regular school setting and for exposure to opportunities outside the borough of Mercer. If students are involved in competition activities, enrichment time may be used to help prepare the student for competition. During enrichment time, students receive specialized materials and resources, not to mention, time with their intellectual peers. The topics of study offered, but not limited too, may include:

- The Stock Market and “*The Herald’s*” Stock Market Game
- The Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science - PJAS
- National History Day Project
- American History Essay Contest
- Knowledge Master Open
- National Spelling Bee
- Rollercoaster Science – Physics Unit

- Science Olympiad
- Math Olympiad
- Odyssey of the Mind
- Future Problem-Solving Program
- Environmental Science Competitions and Workshops
- Film Studies and Movie Making
- The Thiel College Middle School Speech Tournament
- Architecture and Humanities Workshops
- Development of Technology Skills
- BEST Robotics Competition
- Student Selected and Created Projects
- Independent Courses of Study

Acceleration – Curriculum Compacting

Curriculum Compacting is offered for students in the 7th and 8th grade language arts domain. This is not necessarily offered every year, but offered when the need is present. Curriculum compacting consists of students receiving the language arts of the regular curriculum, but it is condensed into a shorter period of time. This allows for extended activities and additional topics of study during the language arts period. For students to participate in curriculum compacting for language arts, they must have excellent reading and writing skills. The pace of the instruction delivered in the compacted course is much faster than that of the regular curriculum. Extended activities, such as drama, plays, creative writing, literature circles and speeches are incorporated into the curriculum compacted course.

Acceleration – Credit by Examination

Students that wish to accelerate through the course sequencing of content areas, have the option of credit by examination. Students may study a selected course over the summer, and in August complete an exam to demonstrate competency. If the exam is scored at a proficient level (80%) or better, the student is exempt from taking the course. In the middle school, it is typical of students to take exams in the area of math. For example, 6th grade students going to 7th grade may study pre-algebra over the summer. The exam is taken in August and hypothesize that the student is successful. The student would then schedule Algebra I for 7th grade, rather than pre-algebra.

This type of acceleration allows a student to move through more advanced studies at an age earlier than their peers. It will allow students in their high school years, to have schedules available for high level, Advanced Placement (AP) or college level courses. We also have students that graduate early.

Curriculum & Instruction Secondary: Grades 9 - 12

All curriculum and instruction activities are subject to change based upon individual student needs.

In grades 9-12, acceleration and independent studies are the two most frequently utilized options for gifted support. Due to the nature of student's schedules being loaded academically, often student's time for enrichment is limited. At this age, it is our plan to help guide gifted students into making choices that will benefit them academically, not only in high school, but in their future plans post-graduation. Secondary students are encouraged to participate in the development of their GIEP. Below is a list of activities in which many secondary gifted students participate.

Enrichment “Independent Studies”

Students in grades 9-12 participate in a variety of activities based upon their individual needs. The following list is not inclusive of all activities, but is a compilation of activities that are commonly utilized.

- SAT Preparation and Practice
- College Search and Selection
- Career Study and Career Shadowing
- Community Mentoring Programs
- The Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science - PJAS
- National History Day Project
- Model United Nations
- Academic Competitions and Summer Programs
- Future Problem-Solving Program
- Film Studies and Movie Making
- Art, Architecture and Humanities Workshops
- Development of Higher-Level Technology Skills

- Group Participation in various Thinking and Problem-Solving Activities
- Rigorous Teamwork
- Student Selected and Created Projects
- Independent Courses of Study

Acceleration – Credit by Examination

Students that wish to accelerate through the course sequencing of content areas, have the option of credit by examination. Students may study a selected course over the summer, and in August complete an exam to demonstrate competency. If the exam is scored at a proficient level (80%) or better, the student is exempt from taking the course. In the high school, it is typical of students to take exams in the area of math. For example, 9th grade students going to 10th grade may study physical science over the summer. The exam is taken in August and hypothesize that the student is successful. The student would then schedule chemistry for 10th grade, rather than physical science.

This type of acceleration allows a student to move through more advanced studies at an age earlier than their peers. It will allow students in their high school years, to have schedules available for high level, Advanced Placement (AP) or college level courses. We also have students that graduate early.

Glossary of Terms

Like alphabet soup, acronyms can become very confusing. The list below is common terminology when referring to gifted education, state regulations, and process and procedural dealings with gifted education.

Acronyms

CBA	~	Curriculum Based Assessment
GIEP	~	Gifted Individualized Education Program
GMDE	~	Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation
GMDT	~	Gifted Multidisciplinary Team
GWR	~	Gifted Written Report
NORA	~	Notice of Recommended Assignment

Terminology

Acceleration – Access to higher-level learning activities and skill development than typically provided in regular education to students of the same age. The pacing, complexity and depth of planned coursework are modified as indicated by individual needs. Acceleration may include: planned course compacting/telescoping, subject acceleration, specially designed instruction, credit by examination or performance, interdisciplinary planned courses, distance learning courses, higher education level courses, independent or self-directed study earned by successfully meeting criteria established by higher education institutions on a nationally given and scored advanced placement examination.

Advanced Placement Courses – Planned courses of study in which secondary regular education students may gain college credit and/or advanced college placement. These courses are normally available only at the 11th and 12th grade level. Credit is earned by successfully meeting criteria established by higher education institutions on a nationally given and scored advanced placement examination.

Compacting – Elimination of content that the student has already mastered allowing a faster paced learning progression based on the student's rate of acquisition/retention of new materials and skills.

Credit by Examination – Students receive credit for a course upon satisfactory completion of a comprehensive examination.

Enrichment – In-depth learning experiences that provide interaction with new ideas, skills and topics that enhance the curriculum. These experiences are based upon individual student strengths, interests and needs.

GIEP – Gifted Individualized Education Plan – A yearly written plan describing the education to be provided to a gifted student.

GMDE – Gifted Multidisciplinary Evaluation – A systematic process of testing, assessment, other evaluative processes, and information that describes a student's academic functioning, learning strengths, learning problems, and educational needs and used by the GIEP team to make a determination about whether or not a student is gifted and needs specially designed instruction.

GWR – Gifted Written Report – A written report that brings together the information and findings from the evaluation concerning the student's educational needs and strengths.

Gifted Education – Specially designed instruction to meet the needs of a gifted student that is conducted in an instructional setting, provided in an instructional or skill area, provided at no costs to the parents, provided under the authority of a school district, directly, by referral or by contract, provided by an agency, individualized to meet the educational needs of the student, reasonably calculated to yield meaningful educational benefit and student progress, and provided in conformity with a GIEP.

Intelligence Quotient (I.Q.) – A measure of intellectual aptitude at a given point in time based on comparison of children of the same chronological age. It is one of the many ways to measure a student's academic potential.

Mentally Gifted – Outstanding intellectual and creative ability in which the development requires specially designed instruction, programs or support services, or both, not ordinarily provided in the regular education program.

Support Services – Services as required under §16.33 (relating to support services) that assist a gifted student to benefit from gifted education. Examples of the term include, psychological services, parent counseling and education, counseling services, and/or transportation to and from gifted programs to classrooms in buildings operated by the district.

Twice Exceptional – Sometimes referred to as “dually exceptional students” meaning a student is eligible for both gifted services and special education services.